

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks at a Dinner Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea in New York City

May 4, 2017

Thank you so much. Great honor. And thank you to my very good friend, Rupert Murdoch—there's only one Rupert, that we know—but for helping to keep this history alive—and he's been working on this for a long time; he loves Australia—and for the next generation. And thanks also to the legendary, talented golfer, Greg Norman. I used to think I was a great player. Then I played with Greg one time, and I said, well, I'm not going to play golf for a living. *[Laughter]* He me a lot of time, I'll tell you that. *[Laughter]*

And thank you to everyone here tonight for helping us to honor and remember those very brave souls who answered the call of freedom. Also to Anthony Pratt, who just pledged \$2 billion—and that's peanuts for Anthony, if you know Anthony. *[Laughter]* Come on, Anthony, you can do better than that. *[Laughter]* Thank you. Thank you very much, Anthony. That's beautiful.

It's really a special privilege to be back on the *Intrepid* and to address both American and Australian heroes. Melania and I are thrilled to be joined by a very, very special Prime Minister and his wonderful wife Lucy, who I've just gotten to know. And you know, they said we had a rough phone call. We really didn't have a rough phone call, did we? *[Laughter]* Everyone is talking about this phone call. The media was saying, what do you think about the phone call? You didn't really hang up. No, we had actually a very nice call, right? Good. Now the record is straight, all of those people back there. *[Laughter]* Thank goodness. *[Laughter]* It's true. We had a very nice phone—got a little testy. It got a little bit testy, but that's okay. We've had a very good relationship, and I'm very proud of the relationship. Thank you very much, Malcolm.

The Prime Minister and I just finished a productive discussion about the interests of our two countries. Together we discussed crucial issues ranging from national security to trade, to immigration and enhanced economic cooperation. We reaffirmed the tremendous friendship between the United States and Australia and the vital importance of our security and our alliance.

The Armed Forces of our two nations are operating side-by-side almost every day, fighting to defeat ISIS and the scourge of terrorism. And we will eradicate terrorism. To every man and woman who has served America and Australia in uniform, two proud nations salute you, believe me.

There is no better place to remember the importance of military readiness than this ship. It was laid down just 1 week before the tragic—and the tragedy of Pearl Harbor and helped secure freedom in its hour of need.

I was proud to share the news that this week, my administration reached a historic deal with Congress to end the devastating cuts to the United States military. I don't know what they were thinking when they started cutting, but we've got it all coming back, and big league, believe me. *[Laughter]* It's coming back fast, ordering lots of planes, lots of ships. Lots of jobs too, by the way. We will add more than \$25 billion for national defense in a short period of time, and we will ensure that our service members have the equipment, tools, training, and resources that they need and that they so richly deserve.

But security also requires friends that you can truly count on. That is why I was pleased to meet with Prime Minister Turnbull, and why I'm so glad to be here with you tonight. And we had a great meeting just a little while ago.

I want to thank the American Australian Association for hosting this event, which I've been contributing to, by the way, for years through Rupert. *[Laughter]* Every year. He'd send me this letter, could you please give money? I say, what do I have to do with that, Rupert? And I'd just keep sending him money, money. And now I realize that was money well spent. That's great. Right, Rupert? For years, I've been doing my thing for Rupert. And for its decades of work to strengthen the ties between our two countries. They've done a great job. America and Australia are old friends and, really, natural partners, and with your help, we will remain so for a very, very long time to come.

Our two nations were born as the rebellious children of the same parent. *[Laughter]* It's a very interesting statement. I've heard that before, too, about people. And for nearly a century, Americans and Australians have fought together, bled together, and died together as brothers and sisters. Since the First World War, when Australians led Americans in the Battle of the Hummel, our brave warriors have fought shoulder to shoulder in every major conflict together. Their righteous cause has always been the same: the safety of our citizens and the survival of our freedom. From the beaches of Normandy—a vicious, vicious fight—to the jungles of Vietnam and the desert landscapes of the Middle East—where lots of progress, believe it or not, after all these years, is being made—Americans have had no better friends than the Australians. I mean that.

We are proudly and profoundly grateful for Australia's contributions in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and their help in the fight against terrorism following the terrible attacks of September 11. On behalf of the United States, I thank the Australian people tonight. Believe me, I have so many friends here from this country, and we love Australia, all of us. We really love Australia. Thank you very much.

I know there are many Active Duty service personnel from both nations with us in the audience, and I want to express our gratitude to each and every one of you. We are privileged to be joined by many amazing veterans from our two countries as well, and for, really, from so many different conflicts. There are so many conflicts that we fought on and worked on together—and by the way, in all cases, succeeded on. It's nice to win. *[Laughter]* It's nice to win. *[Laughter]* And we've won a lot, haven't we, Mr. Prime Minister? We've won a lot. We're going to keep it going, by the way. *[Laughter]*

You've given your love and loyalty to your nations, and tonight a room of grateful patriots says thank you. We are especially honored by the presence tonight of seven World War II veterans. And we've been talking about them all night, but I should mention their name once again, perhaps for the final time tonight, or we can keep mentioning them because they're worth it. And their names again: John Hancock, Derek Holyoake, Gordon Johnson, Norm Tame, Wendell Thrasher, Roger Spooner, and Bill White. Great, great people. *[Applause]* Great.

These men stood at the breach in the battle to save civilization. And their sacrifice kept us free. Exactly 75 years ago this week, these men saw that historic battle with their own eyes. And we've also covered that very, very vicious, violent battle. But this is a little bit of a different description. But the end result was the same: We won. We won.

They saw enemy planes flying toward them by the dozen, they saw the flames erupt into the air, and they saw the true cost of war in the faces of the heroes that never returned. On this special gathering, on this special night, we remember the courage of these men and every man, Australian and American, who fought in the Battle of the Coral Sea.

The count of the dead goes on and on. And the number of wounded do not even begin to describe the toughness of the fight and their incredible sacrifice. But perhaps in the story of just one man, we can hope to get a small glimpse of its measure. It is the story of Lieutenant Jack Powers, a Navy flyer. He grew up just miles from here in a modest apartment in Washington Heights, right up the road. He then went on to the United States Naval Academy, incredible place. There, his roommate said of Jack: "Never trust him to respect conventionalities." Because he wasn't a conventional person, to put it mildly. "He's a hilarious rebel and his own man. You'll like him"—and really like him a lot, but you know what, he's just a different kind of a guy. In other words, he was a New Yorker. [*Laughter*]

By the attack on Pearl Harbor, Jack had already served 6 years in the Navy. In the 6 months that followed, the Allies suffered many defeats and many, many casualties. Japan captured footholds all across the Pacific and now was closing—and really fast—closing in on Australia. In May 1942, the invasion fleet moved on Port Moresby, the vital base just a few hundred miles from Australian shores. It was there, off the coast, that American and Australian ships met the enemy in the Coral Sea.

On the morning of May 7, Jack Powers launched his Dauntless dive bomber from the depth and deck of the *Yorktown*. He was some flyer—I can tell you that—some great flyer. Soon, he dived straight at an enemy carrier and dropped his bomb so low, he was almost caught in the blast, and he was badly hurt. But he escaped, and the carrier sank.

That night, on the *Yorktown*, Jack urged the other pilots to take the same risk. He said, that's the way you do it, that's the way you win, that's the way you sink them, whatever the cost, even if it costs you your lives. That's the way you sink the ship.

The next morning he pressed his point again: "Remember," he said, "the folks back home are counting on us. I'm going to get a hit if I have to lay it down right next to that flight deck." In their courage, they turned the tide of the Pacific war. They had tremendous success. They were knocking out ship after ship.

That day Jack flew his plane to another carrier, straight into a hail of oncoming lead and fire, to land a devastating blow on its deck. Seconds later, the colossal blast—the one Jack was talking about and saying, we have to take the risk—engulfed his plane, and Jack was gone. He was dead. He was brave, but what a job he did.

Sometime before Jack died, he sent a wire home to his father in New York. It read: "Dear Dad. One thousand miles away doesn't make any difference. . . .Your bad son is thinking of you, hoping that he is worthy of being called a chip off the old block." His father was a tough cookie also.

Now it is we who are thinking of Jack, and all those brave souls who fought alongside of him—with that incredible form of attack—and especially those who found their final resting place beneath the waters where they waged that greatest of battles. They lost their lives in the fires of war, but gained immortality through their sacrifice.

And now, 75 years later, we hope that we are worthy of their deeds in the beautiful, beautiful Coral Sea. We hope to be worthy of the sacrifices made by every servicemember who has fought in our name, past and present.

The men who fought the Second World War saw terrible things, horrible things, deathly things, but they also witnessed spectacular valor and bravery. And from the wreckage of that horrible war, they rebuilt their nations and launched civilization to new heights. They knew that together, free people can achieve extraordinary things and that one hero can make all of the difference in the world.

In those Pacific waters, we forged iron bonds between our two countries. Few peoples in the world share ties in history, affection, and culture like the Americans and the Australians. Few, believe me. Those ties were sealed with the blood of our fathers and grandfathers, and those same ties are now the priceless heritage we celebrate so beautifully tonight.

So, with love for our two nations, with pride in our shared history, and with faith in Almighty God, we renew our old friendship, and we pledge our lasting partnership in the search for prosperity and everlasting peace.

Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much. I'm honored that you're here. I'm honored that Mrs. Turnbull is here. And I'm honored that everybody in this room is with us to realize what a great, great relationship our two nations have together.

God bless you, God bless our fallen heroes, God bless the Australian people, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you, all.

NOTE: The President spoke 9:01 p.m. at the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Rupert Murdoch, executive cochairman, News Corp.; Anthony Pratt, global chairman, Pratt/Visy Industries; former professional golfer Greg Norman; Athens, GA, resident John Hancock, Iron City, GA, resident Roger Spooner, and Moulton, AL, resident Wendell E. Thrasher; and Queanbeyan, Australia, resident Derek Holyoake, Canberra, Australia, resident Gordon Johnson, Victoria, Australia, resident Norm Tame, and Mountain Creek, Australia, resident A. William White. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization. The transcript, prepared for immediate release by the Office of the Press Secretary, was received by the Office of the Federal Register on July 27.

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